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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, November 3, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY.)

SUBJECT: "Honey Uses." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Entomology, U.S.D.A.

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Admiral Byrd is on his way to the South Pole. And sailing along with him are sixty gallons -- or almost five hundred pounds -- of fine white clover honey. That honey is going along to help satisfy the sweet tooth of those 70 explorers. A sweet tooth is always much in evidence among men who are doing physical work in cold climates. And there's a good reason for it. Long before we had any nutritionists to explain the uses of different foods in the body, men had learned that sweets give warmth and energy. Have you ever visited a northern logging camp? Have you ever looked over the supplies of food in the cook shack? If you have, you'll remember what a large supply of sweets the cook had on hand. Now most cooks in logging camps never heard of calories or carbohydrates. But experience has taught them the value of sweets to men doing heavy work, especially in winter.

I'm telling you this bit of news about the honey that is headed for the South Pole just by way of reminding you that this is National Honey Week, and also by way of suggesting that some foods, like some men, deserve distinguished service medals. Honey is one of these foods, for it is not only serving as good food in most parts of the world at the present time; it also has a distinguished past. That's a fact that any student of the Bible knows.

Honey is probably the oldest sweet known. And for many years it was almost the only concentrated sweet known to man. To the early Babylonians, to the Egyptians, to the Greeks and the Romans as well as to the ancient Hebrews, honey was not only a much valued food. It was a luxury food and a medicine. It figured in important ceremonies. It was served at great banquets. You see, sugar cane was still an unknown quantity to these early peoples. Cane sugar, beet sugar, molasses, maple sugar and other present-day sweets hadn't appeared on their dinner tables. So they had to count on honey. Some historians even tell us that the manna which the Chosen People found in the wilderness was wild honey. Wild bees are still very numerous in the wilderness of Judea.

An early bit of advice dating from Babylonian days says: "He who eats honey and spring onions before breakfast need not trouble about his health." This was a favorite combination dish. The Romans baked their meats in honey, made bread with it, used it for fruit confections and sweetened their wine with it. Yes, and what's more, they fattened the snails served at banquets on honey.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, mentions honey as a good remedy for various ills. Later, the Koran pronounced it a useful medicine.

So the story of honey has gone down through the years to the present. For hundreds of years it was almost the only sweet European housewives had for cooking. Early Saxon recipes mention it. Early English and French drinks were made from it. That ancient beverage called mead was made by boiling honey combs in water and then fermenting the liquid. Sack mead was a honey drink that contained hops and brandy.

But that's enough of honey's past. Let's consider ways to use honey in these modern times. Like sugar, honey is a fuel or energy food. Its advantage over sugar is in its special flavor and the fact that it will keep in any climate. Want proof of its keeping quality? Well, listen to this. Specialists over in the Bureau of Entomology have a jar of honey nearly forty years old on their laboratory shelves, still in perfect condition. Probably the best place to keep honey is in a warm room rather than in the refrigerator. Right here let's mention one characteristic of honey. Almost any honey will granulate on standing. But that doesn't prove that it isn't good. The granulation does not affect the flavor at all. Just stand the jar in warm water for awhile and the honey will return to its original liquid state.

Now a point or two about honey flavor. In general the lighter colored honeys are milder in flavor and the darker honeys are more spicy and pungent. The milder flavored honeys are clover, orange blossom, alfalfa or sage. These mild light honeys are excellent for sweetening fruits and beverages, for salads, sandwiches and so on. The spicy dark honeys, like buckwheat honey, are useful in making gingerbread, or cookies, or fruit cakes as well as for eating "as is."

You can use honey in place of molasses in almost any cake or cookie or quick bread recipe. Sometimes you also can substitute honey for sugar in cake recipes. But I can't give you any definite rule for this, as honeys differ quite widely. Of course, if you are using honey instead of sugar, you'll naturally use less liquid in the mixture since honey itself contains some water.

Some day next week I'll answer a few questions I have about using honey. Just now let's plan a Sunday menu featuring honey gingerbread. The main dish is brown stew of beef; then boiled potatoes and peas; then, drop biscuits or muffins; and for dessert, sliced orange with honey gingerbread. Make the gingerbread by using honey instead of molasses in your gingerbread recipe.

